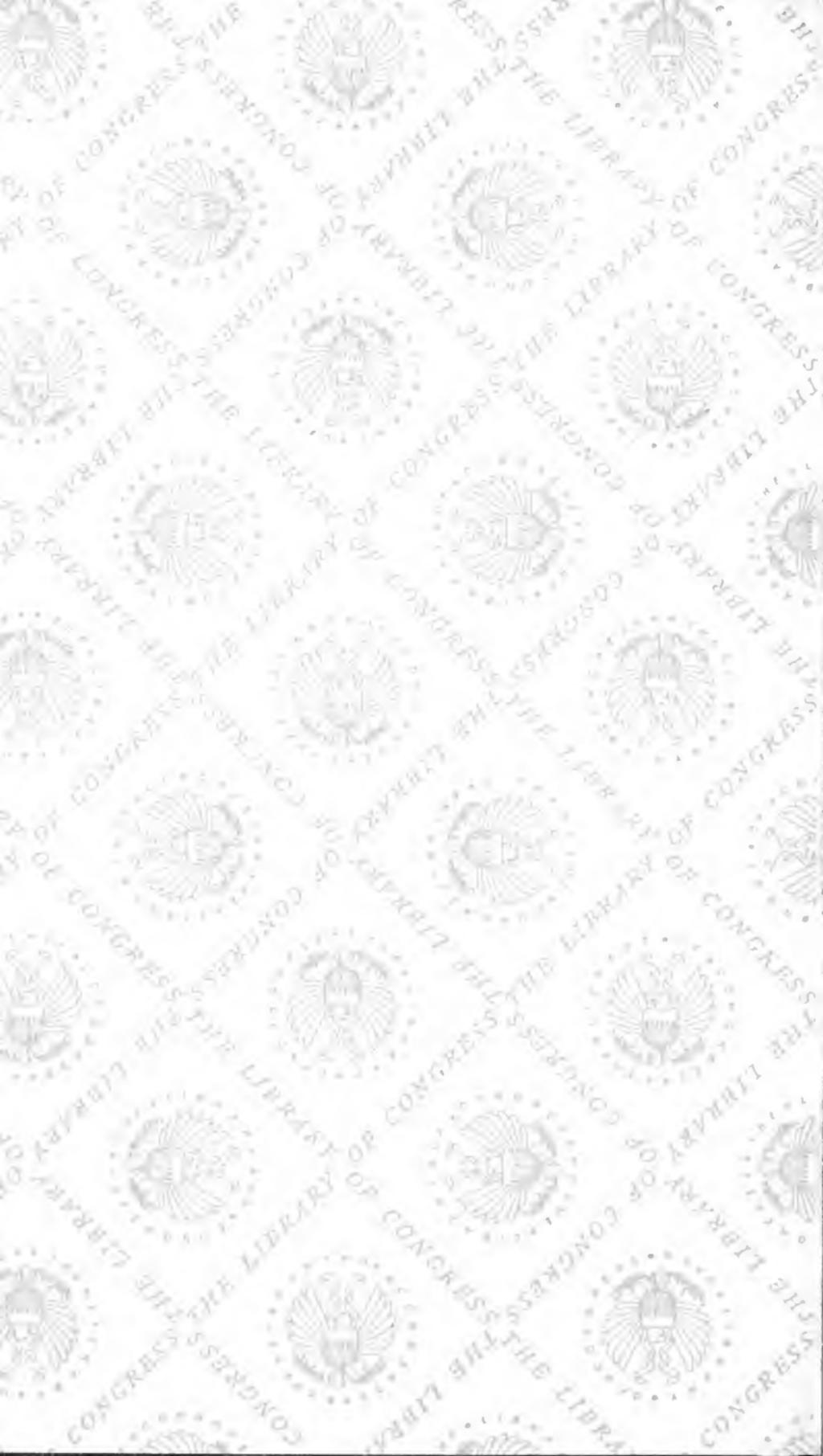
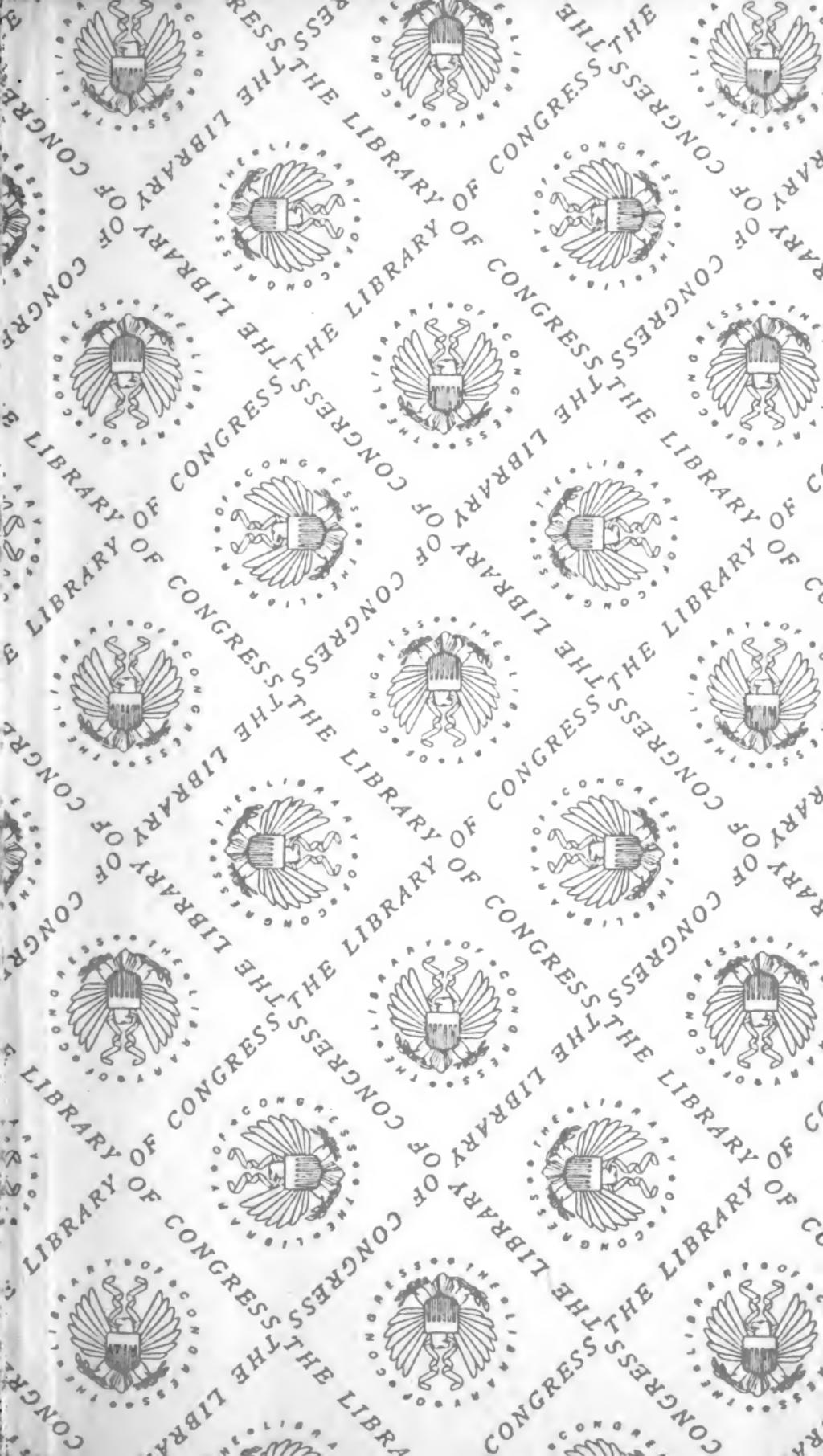
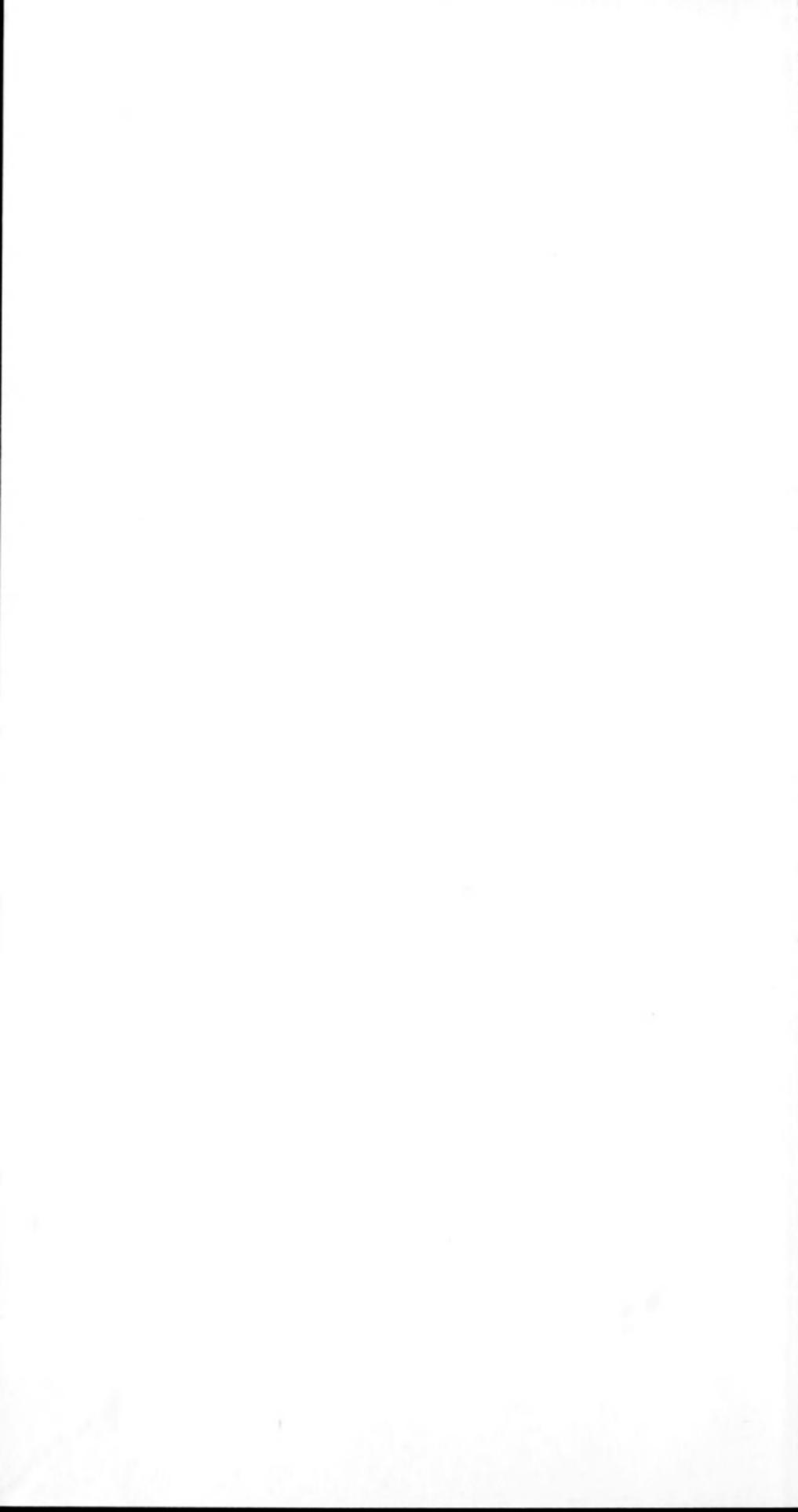


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# Little Journeys to the Homes of American Authors

## Longfellow

BY  
GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

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# Little Journeys

SERIES FOR 1896

## Little Journeys to the Homes of American Authors

The papers below specified, were, with the exception of that contributed by the editor, Mr. Hubbard, originally issued by the late G. P. Putnam, in 1853, in a series entitled *Homes of American Authors*. It is now nearly half a century since this series (which won for itself at the time a very noteworthy prestige) was brought before the public; and the present publishers feel that no apology is needed in presenting to a new generation of American readers papers of such distinctive biographical interest and literary value.

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LONGFELLOW.

This is the place. Stand still, my steed,  
Let me review the scene ;  
And summon from the shadowy Past  
The forms that once have been.

*A Gleam of Sunshine.*

## LONGFELLOW.

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BY GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.\*

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ONE calm afternoon in the summer of 1837, a young man passed down the elm-shaded walk that separated the old Craigie House in Cambridge from the highroad. Reaching the door, he paused to observe the huge, old-fashioned brass knocker and the quaint handle,—relics, evidently, of an epoch of colonial state. To his mind, however, the house and these signs of its age, were not interesting from the romance of antiquity alone, but from their association with the early days of

\* Written in 1853 for Putnam's *Homes of American Authors*.

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our revolution, when General Washington, after the battle of Bunker Hill, had his headquarters in the mansion. Had his hand, perhaps, lifted this same latch, lingering as he clasped it in the whirl of a myriad emotions? Had he, too, paused in the calm summer afternoon, and watched the silver gleam of the broad river in the meadows—the dreamy blue of the Milton hills beyond? And had the tranquillity of that landscape penetrated his heart with “the sleep that is among the hills,” and whose fairest dream to him was a hope now realized in the peaceful prosperity of his country?

At least the young man knew that if the details of the mansion had been somewhat altered, so that he could not be perfectly sure of touching what Washington touched, yet he saw what Washington saw—the same placid meadow-lands, the same undulating horizon, the same calm stream. And it is thus that an old house of distinct association, asserts its claim and secures its influence. It is a nucleus

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of interest,—a heart of romance, from which pulse a thousand reveries enchanting the summer hours. For although every old country mansion is invested with a nameless charm, from that antiquity which imagination is forever crowding with the pageant of a stately and beautiful life, yet if there be some clearly outlined story, even a historic scene peculiar to it, then around that, as the bold and picturesque foreground, all the imagery of youth, and love, and beauty, in a thousand-fold variety of development, is grouped, and every room has its poetic passage, every window its haunting face, every garden-path its floating and fading form of a quite imperishable beauty.

So the young man passed not unaccompanied down the elm-shaded path, and the air and the scene were affluent of radiant phantoms. Imaginary ladies, of a state and dignity only possible in the era of periwigs, advanced in all the solemnity of mob-caps to welcome the stranger. Grave old courtiers, beruffled,

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bewigged, sworded, and laced, trod inaudibly, with gracious bow, the spacious walk; and comely maidens, resident in mortal memory now only as shrivelled and tawny duennas, glanced modest looks, and wondered what new charm had risen that morning upon the somewhat dull horizon of their life. These, arrayed in the richness of a poet's fancy, advanced to welcome him. For well they knew whatever of peculiar interest adorned their house would blossom into permanent forms of beauty in the light of genius. They advanced to meet, as the inhabitants of foreign and strange towns approach, with supplication and submission, the leader in whose eyes flames victory, sure that he would do for them more than they could do for themselves.

But when the brazen clang of the huge knocker had ceased resounding, the great door slowly opened, and no phantom serving-man, but a veritable flesh and blood retainer of the hostess of the man-

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sion invited the visitor to enter. He inquired for Mrs. Craigie. In answer, the door of a little parlor was thrown open, and the young man beheld a tall, erect figure, majestically crowned with a turban, beneath which burned a pair of keen gray eyes. A commanding gravity of deportment, harmonious with the gentle-woman's age, and with the ancestral respectability of the mansion, assured profound respect; while, at a glance, it was clear to see that combination of reduced dignity condescending to a lower estate, and that pride of essential superiority to circumstances, which is traditional among women in the situation of the turbaned lady. There was kindness mellowing the severity of her reply to her visitor's inquiry if there was a room vacant in the house.

"I lodge students no longer," she responded gravely, possibly not without regret—as she contemplated the applicant—that she had vowed so stern a resolution.

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“But I am not a student,” answered the stranger; “I am a professor in the University.”

“A professor?” said she inquiringly, as if her mind failed to conceive a professor without a clerical sobriety of apparel, a white cravat, or at least spectacles.

“Professor Longfellow,” continued the guest, introducing himself.

“Ah! that is different,” said the old lady, her features slightly relaxing, as if professors were, *ex-officio*, innocuous, and she need no longer barricade herself behind a stern gravity of demeanor. “I will show you what there is.”

Thereupon she preceded the Professor up the stairs, and gaining the upper hall, paused at each door, opened it, permitted him to perceive its delightful fitness for his purpose,—kindled expectation to the utmost—then quietly closed the door again, observing: “You cannot have that.” It was most Barmecide hospitality. The professorial eyes glanced rest-

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lessly around the fine old-fashioned points of the mansion, marked the wooden carvings, the air of opulent respectability in the past, which corresponds in New England to the impression of ancient nobility in old England, and wondered in which of these pleasant fields of suggestive association he was to be allowed to pitch his tent. The turbaned hostess at length opened the door of the southeast corner room in the second story, and, while the guest looked wistfully in and awaited the customary, "You cannot have that," he was agreeably surprised by a variation of the strain to the effect that he might occupy it.

The room was upon the front of the house, and looked over the meadows to the river. It had an atmosphere of fascinating repose, in which the young man was at once domesticated, as in an old home. The elms of the avenue shaded his windows, and as he glanced from them, the summer lay asleep upon the landscape in the windless day.

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“This,” said the old lady, with a slight sadness in her voice, as if speaking of times forever past and to which she herself properly belonged,—“this was General Washington’s chamber.”

A light more pensive played over the landscape, in the Poet’s eyes, as he heard her words. He knew that such a presence had consecrated the house, and peculiarly that room. He felt that whoever fills the places once occupied by the great and good, is himself held to greatness and goodness by a sympathy and necessity sweet as mysterious. Forever after, his imagination is a more lordly picture-gallery than that of ancestral halls. Through that gallery he wanders, strong in his humility and resolve, valiant as the last scion of noble Norman races, devoting himself, as of old knights were devoted, by earnest midnight meditation and holy vows, to

Act,—act in the living Present !  
Heart within and God o’erhead !

The stately hostess retired, and the next day the new lodger took possession of his

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room. He lived entirely apart from the old lady, although under the same roof. Her manner of life was quiet and unobtrusive. The silence of the ancient mansion, which to its new resident was truly "the still air of delightful studies," was not disturbed by the shrill cackle of a country household. In the morning, after he had settled himself to the day's occupation, the scholar heard the faint and measured tread of the old lady as she descended to breakfast, her silken gown rustling along the hall as if the shadowy brocade of some elder dame departed, who failed to discover in the ghostly stillness of the well-known passage, that she had wandered from her sphere. Then, after due interval, if, upon his way to the day's collegiate duties, the professor entered the hostess's little parlor to offer her good morning, he found her seated by the open window, through which stole the sweet New England air, lifting the few gray locks that straggled from the turban, as tenderly as Greek winds played

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with Helen's curls. Upon her lap lay an open volume of Voltaire, possibly, for the catholicity of the old lady's mind entertained whatever was vigorous and free,— and from the brilliant wit of the Frenchman, and his icy precision of thought and statement, she turned to the warm day that flooded the meadows with summer, and which in the high tree-tops above her head sang in breezy, fitful cadences of a beauty that no denizen of the summer shall ever see, and a song sweeter than he shall ever hear. It was because she had heard and felt this breath of nature that the matron in her quaint old age could enjoy the page of the Frenchman, even as in her youth she could have admired the delicacy of his point-lace ruffles, nor have less enjoyed, by reason of that admiration, the green garden-walk of Ferney, in which she might have seen them.

Or at times, as the scholar studied, he heard footsteps upon the walk, and the old knocker clanged the arrival of guests,

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who passed into the parlor, and, as the door opened and closed, he could hear, far away and confused, the sounds of stately conversation, until there was a prolonged and louder noise, a bustle, the jar of the heavy door closing, the dying echo of footsteps,—and then the deep and ghostly silence again closed around the small event as the sea ripples into calm over a sinking stone. Or more dreamily still, as at twilight the poet sat musing in his darkening room—hearing the “footsteps of angels” sounding, melodious and low, through all the other “voices of the night,”—he seemed to catch snatches of mournful music thrilling the deep silence with sorrow, and, listening more intently, he heard distinctly the harpsichord in the old lady’s parlor, and knew that she was sitting, turbaned and wrinkled, where she had sat in the glowing triumph of youth, and with wandering fingers was drawing in feeble and uncertain cadence from the keys, tunes she had once dashed from

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them in all the fulness of harmony. Or when, the summer following the poet's arrival, the blight of canker-worms fell upon the stately old trees before the house, and struck them mortally, so that they gradually wasted and withered away, —if then the young man entered her parlor and finding her by the open window, saw that the worms were crawling over her dress and hanging from her white turban, and asked her if they were not disagreeable and if she would do nothing to destroy them, she raised her eyes from another book than Voltaire's, and said to him gravely: "Why, sir, they are our fellow-worms, and have as good a right to live as we." And as the poet returned to his chamber, musing more than ever upon the Saturn Time that so remorselessly consumes his own children, and picturing the gay youth of the grave old hostess, he could not but pause, leaning upon the heavy balusters of the stairs and remember the tradition of the house, that once, as an old hostess, like his own,

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lay waiting for death in her chamber, she sent for her young guest, like himself, to come and take last leave of her, and as he entered her room, and advancing to her bedside, saw her lying stretched at length and clutching the clothes around her neck, so that only her sharply featured and shrunken face was visible,— the fading eye opened upon him for a moment and he heard from the withered lips this stern whisper of farewell: “Young man, never marry, for beauty comes to this !”

The lines of the Poet had fallen in pleasant places. With the old house and its hostess, and its many known and unknown associations, there was no lack of material for thought and speculation. A country house in New England which is not only old, but by the character of its structure and its coherent history, suggests a life of more interest and dignity than that of a simple countryman “whose only aim was to increase his store,” is interesting in the degree of its rarity.

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The traveller upon the highroad before the Craigie House, even if he knew nothing of its story, would be struck by its quaint dignity and respectability, and make a legend, if he could not find one already made. If, however, his lot had been cast in Cambridge, and he had been able to secure a room in the mansion, he would not rest until he had explored the traditions of its origin and occupancy, and had given his fancy moulds in which to run its images. He would have found in the churchyard of Cambridge a free-stone tablet supported by five pillars, upon which, with the name, Col. John Vassal, died in 1747, are sculptured the words, Vas-sol, and the emblems, a goblet and sun. Whether this device was a proud assertion of the fact, that the fortunes of the family should be always as

A beaker full of the warm South,

happily no historian records; for the beaker has long since been drained to the dregs, and of the stately family noth-

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ing survived in the early part of the poet's residence in the house, but an old black man who had been born, a slave, in the mansion during the last days of the Vassals, and who occasionally returned to visit his earliest haunts, like an Indian the hunting-grounds of his extinct tribe.

This Col. John Vassal is supposed to have built the house towards the close of the first half of the last century. Upon an iron in the back of one of the chimneys, there is the date, 1759, which probably commemorates no more than the fact of its own insertion at that period, inasmuch as the builder of the house would hardly commit the authentic witness of its erection to the mercies of smoke and soot. History capitulates before the exact date of the building of the Craigie House, as completely as before that of the foundation of Thebes. But the house was evidently generously built, and Col. John Vassal having lived there in generous style, died, and lies under

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the free-stone tablet. His son John fell upon revolutionary times, and was a royalist. The observer of the house will not be surprised at the fact. That the occupant of such a mansion should, in colonial troubles, side with the government, was as natural as the fealty of a Douglas or a Howard to the king.

The house, however, passed from his hands, and was purchased by the provincial government at the beginning of serious work with the mother country. After the battle of Bunker Hill, it was allotted to George Washington as his headquarters. It was entirely unfurnished, but the charity of neighbors filled it with necessary furniture. The southeastern room upon the lower floor, at the right of the front door, and now occupied as a study by Mr. Longfellow, was devoted to the same purpose by Washington. The room over it, as Madame Craigie has already informed us, was his chamber. The room upon the lower floor, in the rear of the study,

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which was afterwards enlarged and is now the Poet's library, was occupied by the aides-de-camp of the commander-in-chief. And the southwest room, upon the lower floor, was Mrs. Washington's drawing room. The rich old wood carving in this apartment is still remarkable, still certifies the frequent presence of fine society. For, although during the year in which Washington occupied the mansion, there could have been as little desire as means for gay festivity; yet Washington and his leading associates were all gentlemen—men who would have graced the elegance of a court with the same dignity that made the plainness of a republic admirable. Many of Washington's published letters are dated from this house. And could the walls whisper, we should hear more and better things of him than could ever be recorded. In his chamber are still the gay-painted tiles peculiar to fine houses of the period; and upon their quaint and grotesque images the glancing eyes of the Poet's

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children now wonderingly linger, where the sad and doubtful ones of Washington must have often fallen as he meditated the darkness of the future.

Many of these peculiarities and memories of the mansion appear in the Poet's verses. In the opening of the poem *To a Child* the tiles are painted anew.

The lady with the gay macaw,  
The dancing girl, the brave Bashaw  
With bearded lip and chin ;  
And, leaning idly o'er his gate,  
Beneath the imperial fan of state,  
The Chinese mandarin.

The next figure that distinctly appears in the old house is that of Thomas Tracy, a personage of whom the household traditions are extremely fond. He was a rich man, in the fabulous style of the East ; such a nabob as Oriental imaginations can everywhere easily conjure, while practical experience wonders that they are so rare. He carried himself with a rare lavishness. Servants drank costly wines from carved pitchers in the incredible days of Thomas Tracy ; and in his

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stately mansion, a hundred guests sat down to banquets, and pledged their hosts in draughts whose remembrance keeps his name sweet, as royal bodies were preserved in wine and spices. In the early days of national disorder, he sent out privateers to scour the seas and bleed Spanish galleons of their sunniest juices, and reap golden harvests of fruits and spices, of silks and satins, from East and West Indian ships, that the bountiful table of Vassal House might not fail, nor the carousing days of Thomas Tracy become credible. But these "spacious times" of the large-hearted and large-handed gentleman suddenly ended. The wealthy man failed; no more hundred guests appeared at banquets; no more privateers sailed into Boston Bay, reeking with riches from every zone; Spain, the Brazils, the Indies, no more rolled their golden sands into the pockets of Thomas Tracy; servants, costly wines, carved pitchers, all began to glimmer and go, and finally Thomas Tracy and

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his incredible days vanished as entirely as the gorgeous pavilions with which the sun in setting piles the summer west.

After this illuminated chapter in the history of the house, Captain Joseph Lee, a brother of Madame Tracy, appears in the annals, but does not seem to have illustrated them by any special gifts or graces. Tradition remains silent, pining for Thomas Tracy, until it lifts its head upon the entry into the house of Andrew Craigie, Apothecary-General to the Northern Provincial Army, who amassed a fortune in that office, which, like his great predecessor, he presently lost; but not until he had built a bridge over the Charles River, connecting Cambridge with Boston, which is still known by his name. Andrew Craigie did much for the house, even enlarging it to its present form; but tradition is hard upon him. It declares that he was a huge man, heavy and dull; and evidently looks upon his career as the high lyric of Thomas Tracy's, muddled into tough prose. In

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the best and most prosperous days of Andrew Craigie, the estate comprised two hundred acres. Upon the site of the present observatory, not far from the mansion, stood a summer-house, but whether of any rare architectural device, whether, in fact, any orphic genius of those days made a summer house, which, like that of Mr. Emerson's, only "lacked scientific arrangement" to be quite perfect, does not appear. Like the apothecary to the Northern army, the summer-house is gone, as likewise an aqueduct that brought water a quarter of a mile. Tradition, so enamoured of Tracy is generous enough to mention a dinner-party given by Andrew Craigie every Saturday, and on one occasion points out peruked and powdered Talleyrand among the guests. This betrays the presence in the house of the best society then to be had. But the prosperous Craigie could not avoid the fate of his opulent predecessor, who also gave banquets. Things rushed on too rapidly for him. The

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bridge, aqueduct, and summer-house, two hundred acres and an enlarged house, were too much for the fortune acquired in dealing medicaments to the Northern army. The "spacious times" of Andrew Craigie also came to an end. A visitor walked with him through his large and handsome rooms, and struck with admiration, exclaimed :

"Mr. Craigie, I should think you could lose yourself in all this spaciousness."

"Mr. ——" (tradition has forgotten the name), said the hospitable and ruined host, "I *have* lost myself in it,"—and we do not find him again.

After his disappearance Mrs. Craigie, bravely swallowing the risings of pride, and still revealing in her character and demeanor the worthy mistress of a noble mansion, let rooms. Edward Everett resided here just after his marriage, and while still professor in the college of which he was afterward President. Willard Phillips, Jared Sparks, now the head of the University, and Joseph E. Worces-

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ter, the Lexicographer, have all resided here, sometimes sharing the house with Mrs. Craigie, and, in the case of Mr. Worcester, occupying it jointly with Mr. Longfellow when the grave old lady removed her stately turban for the last time.

The Craigie House is now the Poet's, and has again acquired a distinctive interest in history. It was in Portland, Maine, in the year 1807, and in an old square wooden house upon the edge of the sea, that Longfellow was born. The old house stood upon the outskirts of the town, separated only by a street from the water. In the lower story there is now a shop,—a bookseller's doubtless, muses imagination,—so that the same house which gave a singer to the world may offer to the world his songs to justify its pride in him. He graduated at Brunswick with Hawthorne, whom then the Poet knew only as a shy youth in a bright-buttoned coat, flitting across the college grounds. During his college

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days he wooed the muses, as all students woo ; and in the *United States Library Gazette*, then published in Boston, the world learned how his suit prospered. In 1826 Longfellow first visited Europe. He loitered through France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Holland, and England, and returned to America in 1829. Appointed Professor in his Alma Mater, he devoted himself to the scholar's life, poring long and earnestly over the literature of lands which he knew so well and truly that their literature lived for him and was not a hard hieroglyph only. During these quiet professorial years he contributed articles to the *North American Review*, a proceeding not unprecedented among New England scholars, and in which Emerson, the Everetts, and all the more illustrious of the literary men of the North, have been participants. The forms of foreign travel gradually grouped themselves in his mind. Vivid pictures of European experience, such as illuminate the memory of every young and romantic

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traveller, constantly flashed along his way, and he began to retrace them in words, that others might know, according to the German proverb, that “behind the mountains there are men also.”

In this way commenced the publication of *Outre Mer, or Sketches from Beyond the Sea*, a work of foreign reminiscences, tales and reveries of the life peculiar to Europe. It was published, originally, in numbers, by Samuel Colman, a townsman of the author’s. Like the *Sketch-Book*, it was issued whenever a number was prepared, but unlike the author of the *Sketch-Book*, the Professor could not write as his motto, “I have no wife nor children, good or bad, to provide for”; for in the midst of the quiet professorial days, still a very young man, the Poet was married,—a fleeting joy ending by the death of his wife in Rotterdam in 1835. In Brunswick, also, and at this time, he made the translation of the ode upon *Coplas de Manrique*, by his son Don Jozé Manrique, a rich, mournfully-

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rolling Spanish poem. The earlier verses of the young man had made their mark. In school reading-books, and in volumes of elegant extracts, and preserved in many a daintily ribboned manuscript, the *April Day*, *Woods in Winter*, *Hymn of the Moravian Nuns at Bethlehem*, *Burial of the Minnisink*, and others, were readily found. As yet the Poet was guiltless of a volume, but his name was known, and upon the credit of a few fugitive pieces he was mentioned first after the monopolizing masters of American verse.

In the year 1835 he received the appointment of Professor in Harvard College, Cambridge, which he accepted, but sailed for Europe again in the course of the year. Upon leaving he committed the publication of *Outre Mer* to the Harpers in New York, who issued the entire work in two volumes. The second European visit was confined to the north of Europe, Denmark, England, Sweden, Germany, a long pause in Holland, and

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Paris. In the autumn of 1836 he returned, and in December of the same year removed to Cambridge to reside. Here, again, the *North American Review* figures a little in the literary life of the Poet. He wrote several articles for it during the leisure of his engagements as Professor of Modern Literature, and, at length, as we have seen, one calm afternoon in the summer of 1837, Longfellow first took lodgings in the Craigie House, with which the maturity and extent of his reputation was to be so closely associated.

Some wan ghost of Thomas Tracy, lordly with lace and gracious in perfumed pomp, surely the Poet saw advancing, holding in his hand some one of these antique carved pitchers brimmed with that costly wine, and exhorting him to drain potent draughts, that not by him should the fame of the incredible days be tarnished, but that, as when a hundred guests sat at the banquet, and a score of full-freighted ships arrived for Thomas Tracy, the traveller should say,

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A purple light shines over all,  
It beams from the luck of Edenhall.

The vow was pledged, and now under  
the few elms that remain of those  
which the fellow-worms of Mrs. Craigie  
blighted, the ghost of Thomas Tracy  
walks appeased.

In his still southeastern upper chamber, in which Washington had also slept, the Poet wrote *Hyperion* in the years 1838-9. It is truly a romance, a beaker of the wine of youth, and was instantly received as such by the public. That public was, and must always be, of the young. No book had appeared which so admirably expressed the romantic experience of every poetic young mind in Europe, and an experience which will be constantly renewed. Probably no American book had ever so passionate a popularity as *Hyperion*. It was published in the summer of 1839 by Colman, who had then removed to New York, but at the time of publication he failed, and it was undertaken by John Owen, the Univer-

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sity publisher in Cambridge. It is a singular tribute to the integrity of the work, and a marked illustration of the peculiarity of American development, that Horace Greeley, famous as a political journalist, and intimately associated with every kind of positive and practical movement, was among the very earliest of the warmest lovers of *Hyperion*. It shows our national eclecticism of sentiment and sense, which is constantly betraying itself in a thousand and other ways.

Here, too, in the southeast chamber, were written the *Voices of the Night*, published in 1840. Some of the more noted, such as the *Psalm of Life*, had already appeared in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*. Strangely enough as a fact in American literary history, the fame of the romance was even surpassed, and one of the most popular books of the day was *Longfellow's Poems*. They were read everywhere by every one, and were republished and have continued to

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be republished in England and in various other countries. The secret of his popularity as a poet is probably that of all similar popularity, namely, the fact that his poetry expresses a universal sentiment in the simplest and most melodious manner. Each of his most noted poems is the song of a feeling common to every mind in moods into which every mind is liable to fall. Thus *A Psalm of Life*, *Footsteps of Angels*, *To the River Charles*, *Excelsior*, *The Bridge*, *A Gleam of Sunshine*, *The Day is Done*, *The Old Clock on the Stairs*, *The Arrow and the Song*, *The Fire of Driftwood*, *Twilight*, *The Open Window*, are all most adequate and inexpressibly delicate renderings of quite universal emotions. There is a humanity in them which is irresistible in the fit measures to which they are wedded. If some elegiac poets have strung rosaries of tears, there is a weakness of woe in their verses which repels; but the quiet, pensive thought,—the twilight of the

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mind, in which the little facts of life are saddened in view of their relation to the eternal laws, time and change,—this is the meditation and mourning of every manly heart; and this is the alluring and permanent charm of Longfellow's poetry.

In 1842 the Ballads and other Poems were published, and in the same year the Poet sailed again for Europe. He passed the summer upon the Rhine, residing some time at Boppart, where he saw much of the ardent young German poet Freiligrath. He returned after a few months, composing the poems on slavery during the homeward passage. Upon landing, he found the world drunken with the grace of Fanny Ellsler, and learned, from high authority, that her saltations were more than poetry, whereupon he wrote the fragrant *Spanish Student*, which smells of the utmost South, and was a strange blossoming for the garden of Thomas Tracy.

In 1843 Longfellow bought the house. The two hundred acres of Andrew Craigie

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had shrunken to eight. But the meadow-land in front sloping to the river was secured by the Poet, who thereby secured also the wide and winning prospect, the broad green reaches, and the gentle Milton hills. And if, sitting in the most midsummer moment of his life, he yielded to the persuasions of the siren landscape before him, and the vague voices of the ancestral house, and dreamed of a fate fairer than any Vassal, or Tracy, or Craigie knew, even when they mused upon the destiny of the proudest son of their house,—was it a dream too dear, a poem impossible?

In 1846 the *Belfry of Bruges* collection was published, in 1847 the *Evangeline*, in 1850 *Seaside and Fireside*, and in 1851 the last and best of his works, up to the present time—*The Golden Legend*. In this poem he has obeyed the highest humanity of the poet's calling, by revealing,—which alone the poet can,—not coldly, but in the glowing and affluent reality of life, this truth, that the

## Longfellow

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same human heart has throbbed in all ages and under all circumstances, and that the devotion of Love is for ever and from the beginning the true salvation of man. To this great and fundamental value of the poem is added all the dramatic precision of the most accomplished artist. The art is so subtly concealed that it is not suspected. The rapid reader exclaims, "Why! there is no modern blood in this; it might have been exhumed in a cloister." Yes, and there is the triumph of art. So entirely are the intervening years annihilated that their existence is not suspected. Taking us by the hand, as Virgil Dante, the Poet introduces us directly to the time he chooses, and we are at once flushed and warmed by the same glorious and eternal heart which is also the light of our day. This is the stroke which makes all times and nations kin, and which, in any individual instance, certifies the poetic power.

The library of the Poet is the long

## Longfellow

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northeastern room upon the lower floor. It opens upon the garden, which retains still the quaint devices of an antique design, harmonious with the house. The room is surrounded with handsome book-cases, and one stands also between two Corinthian columns at one end, which impart dignity and richness to the apartment. A little table by the northern window, looking upon the garden, is the usual seat of the Poet. A bust or two, the rich carvings of the cases, the spaciousness of the room, a leopard-skin lying upon the floor, and a few shelves of strictly literary curiosities, reveal not only the haunt of the elegant scholar and poet, but the favorite resort of the family circle. But the northern gloom of a New England winter is intolerant of this serene delight, this beautiful domesticity, and urges the inmates to the smaller room in front of the house communicating with the library, and the study of General Washington. This is still distinctively "the study," as the rear room

## Longfellow

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is "the library." Books are here, and all the graceful detail of an elegant household, and upon the walls hang crayon portraits of Emerson, Sumner, and Hawthorne.

Emerging into the hall, the eyes of the enamoured visitor fall upon the massive old staircase with the clock upon the landing. Directly he hears a singing in his mind :

Somewhat back from the village street,  
Stands the old-fashioned country seat,  
Across its antique portico  
Tall poplar-trees their shadows throw,  
And from its station in the hall  
An ancient timepiece says to all,  
    Forever—never !  
    Never—for ever !

But he does not see the particular clock of the poem, which stood upon another staircase in another quaint old mansion,—although the verse truly belongs to all old clocks in all old country-seats, just as the "Village Blacksmith" and his smithy are not alone the stalwart man and dingy shop under the "spreading chestnut tree" which the Professor daily passes

## Longfellow

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upon his way to his college duties, but belong wherever a smithy stands. Through the meadows in front flows the placid Charles.

River that in silence windest  
Thro' the meadows, bright and free,  
Till at length thy rest thou findest  
In the bosom of the sea !

So calmly, likewise, flows the Poet's life. No longer in his reveries can mingle more than the sweet melancholy of the old house's associations. No tradition records a ghost in those ghostly chambers. As if all sign of them should pass away, not only Mrs. Craigie's fellow-worms destroyed the elms in front, but a noble linden tree in the garden, faded as she failed, and languished into decay after her death. But the pensive grandeur of an old mansion sheds a softer than the "purple light" of the luck of Edenhall upon the Poet's fancies and his page.

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